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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 003397

SIPDIS

STATE FOR E, P, EB/IFD AND EUR/SE  
TREASURY FOR OASIA - MILLS AND LEICHTER  
NSC FOR QUANRUD AND BRYZA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/23/2008

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SUBJECT: UNION OF CHAMBERS PRESIDENT BRIEFS AMBASSADOR ON  
INITIATIVES TO BOLSTER U.S.-TURKEY TIES

(U) Classified by Ambassador W. Robert Pearson. Reasons:  
1.5(b,d).

1. (SBU) Influential Union of Chambers of Commerce (TOBB) President Rifat Hisarciklioglu told the Ambassador May 22 that he had returned from a three-day visit to Washington with agreement on several specific initiatives to bolster the bilateral relationship. They include:

- establishing a working group to promote bilateral trade;
- sponsoring a June 2003 meeting on attracting more foreign direct investment from the United States;
- setting up, in cooperation with the Brookings Institution, a think-tank in Turkey to study the trans-Atlantic relations and Turkey's EU accession; and
- putting together a contact group with CSIS to talk about how to redefine the strategic relationship.

2. (SBU) Hisarciklioglu said he had also stressed in Washington that Turkey could and should play a helpful role in building a stable and prosperous Iraq and in advancing the Middle East Peace Process. He reported that, following FM Gul's visit to Israel and the Israeli President's expected visit to Turkey, Prime Minister Erdogan would visit Israel, probably in August-September. (Note: We have not heard officially about an Erdogan visit, but will follow up with the Foreign Ministry. End note).

3. (SBU) Ambassador expressed appreciation for TOBB's specific ideas, stressing that Turkey needed to take concrete steps -- not just offer rhetoric -- to rebuild bilateral relations. He offered to work with TOBB on the various initiatives, and stressed that he hoped to see specific ideas on enhancing trade and U.S. investment in Turkey.

4. (C) On Iraq, Ambassador noted that the large flows of humanitarian goods already underway indicated that the Turkey-Iraq trade route was a natural. He suggested that a scenario in which the U.S. and Turkey saw eye-to-eye on the development of a new Iraq would prove enormously beneficial to both the Turkish and the Iraqi economies. On the other hand, should there be disagreements, the resulting political tension would have a negative impact on both economies. Recalling several recent unhelpful statements by members of Turkey's establishment, he volunteered that -- at this point -- Americans do not really know where Turkey stands on Iraq.

5. (C) Comment: A steady stream of Turks have been knocking on the Ambassador's door asking (a) how bad the damage to the relationship is, and (b) what Turkey needs to do to repair that damage. Ambassador's consistent message has been that, while the U.S. still considers Turkey to be a friend, Turkey's failure to support us on an issue of overwhelming national interest cannot be ignored. For the relationship to regain its strength, Turkey (the whole country, not just the government) needs to stop sniping at us and take positive, specific steps on Iraq, Cyprus, and the Middle East Peace Process.  
PEARSON